



CONNECTICUT POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

342 North Main Street, West Hartford, Connecticut 06117-2507

(860) 586-7506 Fax: (860) 586-7550 Web site: www.cpcanet.org

Testimony to the Committee on Public Safety, March 4, 2010

Chiefs Anthony Salvatore & James Strillacci, Connecticut Police Chiefs Association

Senator Stillman, Representative Dargan and Members of the Committee on Public Safety, Good Morning. We are here representing the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association (CPCA), to testify on a number of Bills.

We, our member chiefs, and our towns are dismayed and alarmed by **SB# 312, AA Mandating The Regionalization Of Public Safety Emergency Telecommunication Centers**. Current law authorizes a surcharge on phone bills to subsidize maintenance and replacement of 911 terminal equipment, and training and technical assistance to emergency service providers. Current law also offers transition grants to encourage regionalization of dispatch service. The bill would replace the carrot with a stick; it would provide a subsidy **ONLY** to those towns combining dispatch with at least two others.

This is tantamount to revocation of the subsidy, because regionalizing dispatch is harder than it sounds. Budget-strapped towns have studied it, tempted by the transition grant and hopes of personnel savings; none has succeeded. They found that

- Prohibitive start-up costs were required for facility, radio, or technology upgrades.
- Topographical features made expanded radio coverage exorbitant.
- Personnel savings would not materialize in small towns where dispatchers perform other functions—handle walk-in customers, monitor prisoners, handle records, etc.
- Elimination of such dispatchers would convert places of refuge into darkened, locked buildings.
- Differences in union contracts, service levels, and expectations had to be resolved.
- Assessing fair share of the cost was difficult.

In this economy, we understand that the state must look for savings. It's prudent to start with discretionary, low-priority services. It's foolish to start with emergency dispatch.

HB #5327 is AAC The Investigation Of Missing Persons Reports. CPCA opposes this bill as another unfunded mandate. This is the fourth successive session in which missing-person mandates have been proposed, apparently at the prompting of a single activist. Pursuant to Public Act 07-151 the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) developed a policy on the acceptance of missing person reports by police and their response to such reports. This was disseminated to all law enforcement agencies and adopted. It is enough.

HB# 5341, An Act Concerning The Carrying Of Electronic Defense Weapons, would provide for a permit to carry an electronic defense weapon (such as a TASER). Qualifications would be similar to those for a permit to carry a firearm.

This bill would allow citizens to provide for their self-defense by means of a weapon less dangerous than a firearm. The potential for abuse and the consequences of a mistake are far less serious. We therefore support this measure.

We are unsure of the reason for **HB# 5344, An Act Concerning The Nondisclosure Of Information Regarding Persons Arrested For Domestic Violence.** Perhaps it is to avoid indirect identification of the victim of domestic violence.

We don't know whether victims support it; the Victim Advocate's office didn't propose it. We do know that it will make more work for officers, investigators, and clerical staff who will be required to redact reports or flag them for nondisclosure. We also fear that redaction introduces the possibility of error and confusion into official reports. For these reasons we oppose this bill.

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